

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 020946  
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:BDF  
APPROVED BY TH SECRETARY  
NEA:ALATHERTON  
P:PCHABIB  
S/S -O:AWOTTO

-----292209Z 113679 /73

O 292153Z JAN 77 ZFF6  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 020946

NODIS  
FOR CHARGE AND AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, US

SUBJECT: ASF DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REFS: (A) BEIRUT 369; (B) DAMASCUS 636, (C) BEIRUT 377

1. FOR BEIRUT: PLEASE MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO SARKIS  
OR BOUTROS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

-- WE BROUGHT TO THE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION OF THE ISRAELIS  
THE POINTS PRESIDENT SARKIS MADE JANUARY 28 TO CHARGE LANE,  
AND ARE GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THEM AGAIN REGARDING THE  
CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS. WE WANT TO  
GIVE YOU MEANWHILE SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS OF OUR OWN  
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TOGETHER WITH PRELIMINARY COMMENTS THE ISRAELIS HAVE MADE  
ON SARKIS' JANUARY 28 RESPONSE.

-- IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US TO BE AWARE, REGARDLESS  
OF HOW WE MAY PERCEIVE THE SITUATION, THAT THE CONCERN IN  
ISRAEL AND THE LEVEL OF TENSION THAT HAS RESULTED ARE VERY  
CONSIDERABLE. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS UNDER GREAT

PRESSURE FROM THE PUBLIC AND THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION. THE ISRAELI CABINET WILL BE MEETING ON SUNDAY, AND THE SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION WILL DOUBTLESS PREDOMINATE IN THEIR DELIBERATIONS. THE ISRAELIS HAVE NOW TOLD US, IN ADDITION,

THAT THE SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE KNESSET WILL ALSO BE MEETING ON SUNDAY--FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE THE ISRAELIS ARE ATTACHING TO THE PROBLEM. WE ARE CONTINUING TO URGE ISRAELI RESTRAINT, BUT GIVEN THE LEVEL OF TENSION IN THE COUNTRY AND THE POLITICAL PRESSURES THAT ARE BUILDING UP, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL NOT MAKE SOME MOVE.

--THE ISRAELIS ARE NOT UNAWARE OF THE GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SOUTH OF LEBANON, BUT TO THEM THE OVERRIDING ELEMENT IS THAT SYRIAN TROOPS HAVE BEEN MOVED CLOSER TO THE ISRAELI BORDER. WHILE THESE TROOPS HAVE THE CHARACTER OF ARAB SECURITY FORCE ELEMENTS UNDER SARKIS' COMMAND, THEY ARE STILL CLEARLY ARMY UNITS FROM A COUNTRY WITH WHICH ISRAEL IS IN A STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO PASS JUDGMENT ON THE ISRAELI REACTION, WE HAVE TO SAY THAT IT SEEMS TO US UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD SEE THIS RECENT MOVEMENT AS INVOLVING SYRIAN TROOPS RATHER THAN SIMPLY SECURITY FORCES SUBORDINATE TO LEBANESE COMMAND.

--WE ARE CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS TO REDUCE TENSIONS ON THE ISRAELI SIDE, BUT IN VIEW OF THE ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF THIS MOVEMENT, WE THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU  
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TO FIND SOME FORMULA THAT WOULD ENABLE THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE PUBLIC ANXIETIES.

--SINCE THE ISRAELIS ARE CONCERNED THAT THERE ARE NOW SYRIAN TROOPS WHERE THERE WERE NONE IN THE PAST, AND THAT THESE TROOPS MAY IN TIME BE FOLLOWED BY OTHERS, THE ESSENCE OF ANY SOLUTION MUST BE, IT SEEMS TO US, A PLAN TO WITHDRAW THEM AT SOME POINT. WE UNDERSTAND THE EFFECT ON SARKIS' POSITION OF A SUDDEN AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL, BUT HOPE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOME FORMULA THAT WOULD REASSURE THE ISRAELIS THAT THE SYRIAN PRESENCE WOULD NOT BE A NEW AND LASTING FACTOR CLOSE TO THEIR NORTHERN BORDER AND THAT THEY NEED NOT FEAR AN EXPANSION ON THIS PRESENCE.

--WE THEREFORE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WORK OUT SOME ARRANGEMENT WHICH SIGNALS AN EARLY REVERSAL OF THE SOUTHERN MOVEMENT OF THE SYRIAN FORCES AND WHICH WE CAN CONVEY TO THE ISRAELIS. IN THIS CONTEXT, WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT AND

PROSPECTIVE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE AREA RELATIVE TO  
THE PRESENCE OF THESE NEW TROOPS THERE.

2. FOR DAMASCUS: PLEASE PASS TO KHADDAM THE PRESENTATION  
IN PARAGRAPH 1 THAT WE ARE MAKING TO THE LEBANESE, AND ADD  
THE FOLLOWING POINTS FROM ME FOR KHADDAM:

-- I APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS ON MY RECENT MESSAGE AS WELL  
AS YOUR STATEMENT OF REGARD.

-- WHILE I FULLY APPRECIATE THE POINT YOU MAKE THAT THE  
ARAB SECURITY FORCE IS UNDER THE COMMAND OF PRESIDENT  
SARKIS, I THINK WE WOULD BOTH BE MISSING AN ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENT IN THE SITUATION--WHICH IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
REALIZE IN THE INTERESTS OF PREVENTING FURTHER TENSIONS--  
IF WE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THAT THE ISRAELIS PERCEIVE THESE  
ASF UNITS PRIMARILY AS SYRIAN TROOPS. IT IS OBVIOUS TO  
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US FROM OUR TALKS WITH THE ISRAELIS THAT, FOR THEM, THE  
ESSENTIAL FACT IN THIS NEW SITUATION IS THAT SYRIAN TROOPS  
ARE NOW POSITIONED CLOSER TO THE ISRAELI BORDER AT A PLACE  
WHERE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN BEFORE.

-- WE OF COURSE UNDERSTAND SARKIS' PROBLEM, AND WE HAVE  
GREAT SYMPATHY FOR IT. I THINK THE ISRAELIS ALSO UNDER-  
STAND THAT SECURITY IS A PROBLEM IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.  
REGARDLESS OF HOW WE OURSELVES MAY SEE THE SITUATION,  
HOWEVER, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE ISRAELIS DO CONSIDER  
THAT THE MOVEMENT OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF  
THEIR BORDER AFFECTS THEIR SECURITY.

-- AS A RESULT, TENSIONS HAVE BEEN HIGH IN ISRAEL AND THE  
GOVERNMENT IS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM THE PUBLIC AND  
THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION. WE HAVE URGED THE ISRAELIS TO  
REMAIN CALM AND TO KEEP PUBLIC TENSIONS AS LOW AS  
POSSIBLE, AND THEY HAVE ASSURED US THEY WERE ATTEMPTING  
TO DO SO. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS TO  
US THAT SOME FORMULA SHOULD BE FOUND TO REASSURE THE  
ISRAELIS THAT THIS SYRIAN PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH WILL BE  
VERY TEMPORARY AND DOES NOT REPRESENT THE FORERUNNER OF  
AN EXPANDED PRESENCE. WE ARE DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH  
THE LEBANESE ALONG THESE LINES.  
VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** MPOL, PINS, PFOR, PDEV, IS, LE, US, SY, (SARKIS ILYAS)  
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